



San Francisco Public Library

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of JULY 20, 2023

The San Francisco Public Library Commission held a regular meeting on JULY 20, 2023, virtually and at the Koret Auditorium, Main Library.

The regular meeting of the San Francisco Library Commission was called to order at 4:30 PM.

Commissioners Present: Wolf, Huang, Bolander, López, Mall and Ono.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Warfield, Executive Director Library Users Association, Libraryusers2004@yahoo.com, said people can ask all the questions they want, the Commission may not be obligated to answer them. He said the internet as well as the Facebook and other social media are very problematic. There have been folks who are requesting the government regulate them because they talk about the potential for human extinction and AI.

AGENDA ITEM EM NO. 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 15, 2023

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said the minutes could use some improvements and he said he talked about WIFI on after hours and pride programming at the library was a disappointment.

Commission Discussion

Motion: By Commissioner **MALL** seconded by Commissioner **BOLANDER** to approve the June 15, 2023 Minutes.

Action: AYES 6-0 (Wolf, Huang, Bolander, López, Mall and Ono)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Midori Mizuhara and Ally Holmes, with the Gensler Group, shared preliminary insights from the Strategic Planning engagement from stakeholders, commissioners, and staff interviews. Insights included each branch is seen as a vital cornerstone of its community, the Library is a catalyst for culture, connection and creativity and many staff want to

take a more experiential and relational approach to librarianship. Margaret Sullivan, Margaret Sullivan Studios, reported on Partner Insights from interviews with CCSF Department Heads, including the Library has trusted relationships at the Executive Level and is an excellent partner at every level. The presenters outlined Potential Futures Service Models to explore, which were Cultural Activator, radical Equalizer, Living Laboratory, Experiential Educator and Community Builder and what is next in the process and they would report back to the Commission in the fall.

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said the Library has a slogan that it is dedicated to free and equal access to information, knowledge, independent learning, and the joys of reading for our diverse community and he said it's a lovely slogan. But in the online version he couldn't find a single mention of the words book, materials reading. Warfield said it is troubling to go halfway through the process without having talked with library patrons.

Naima Dean, with the Western Edition branch, which is District 5 and considered an equity zone within the system, asked what kind of work was put into looking at how we can better tweak library services to serve who is here in terms of equity.

Diane Gibson said she is a member of the board of the Friends of the Public Library and The Friends are excited about the Strategic Planning developments and looking forward to participating further in the process.

Commission Discussion

President Wolf thanked Vice President Huang for serving on the Strategic Planning Committee on behalf of the Commission.

Vice President Huang said the process is thorough and guided by an excellent team and there will be exciting updates ahead. Huang said in terms of the Futures they are talking about, he would like the Commission to consider them in terms of the Library will look like ten years from now, which is a lot to imagine.

Commissioner Bolander said it is challenging to figure out about the future because no one knows what the future is going to hold, like in 100 years from now would this be relevant and it would be and that's the foundation of good strategy, it stands the test of time. He said the three pillars of labor, offerings, and city and community, starts with the people always first and foremost, you cannot have a great organization without great people and if you fix the people and/or improve the people and/or empower the people, everything else sorts itself out. Bolander said in reading through all the quotes from the rest of the city officials, it seems that the Library would be a center of excellence for government excellence, and he couldn't think of another organization that could do a better job of that, telling concise and compelling stories of the future that resonate, the opportunity to change the world one department, one city at a time. The Library has been a leader in this for a long time and it's important to capture that. Not only what we can do for us, but what we can do for the city.

Commissioner Mall thanked everyone for their work on Strategic Planning and said the Library is already doing most of what they're talking about, and doesn't need to work at being vibrant, weird, and creative, that's San Francisco and the mission of the library, we're already doing it, maybe it's not perfect but based on what is currently going on, all those things are in operation. Mall said she recently visited a library in Oslo, Norway and never realized the extent to which the physical atmosphere creates a sense of community, imagination, and expression. You walk into that library, and you want to sit down and read a book. The lighting, the chairs were amazing, and she said she didn't know such a thing existed. The Main Library building is certainly not optimal for a cultural space or a community center but there are things that we're not addressing in this strategic plan.

Vice President Huang said the push that Mall is giving is extremely useful for the yearly budget cycle of what initiatives we are funding in the next year or two to push in a certain direction. The intention helps at the framework of when we are trying to line up budget priorities against some of these themes. The Library currently has six different categories in the premier urban library framework and each of the budget priorities are lined up against one of those categories and this is the correct framework for the next ten years and when we get more concrete about certain things that's when there's a useful push on what are we specifically doing here and a guiding thing of what the organization is doing right now, and what we want to be over the next ten years.

Commissioner Bolander said the way the Library has been doing things for the last 160 years are generally in the right direction of what we should still be doing and there are additional things we need to push on to realize the strategic initiatives, the pillars. Most organizations go through strategic planning when they are a mess. The Library can ask how we make it even better.

Mall responded that she and Commissioner Ono have been on the Library Commission for a long time and during that time the Library has changed a lot, it is more community based it's much more diverse and the programs did not have the breadth it has now in the branches or Main, the Library is really running on all cylinders and it is not that everything is the same year after year after year.

Vice President Huang said an example in the current framework is being explicit that digital is a priority and we need to do digital stuff, and now we don't talk about it because everything is digital by nature of doing the work you used to call digital and we are at a point where we don't need to name it as the thing that we need to focus on getting better at.

Commissioner Ono asked what San Francisco will look like in ten years. Going through the pandemic and the Doom Cycle, what downtown looks like now, we don't know what San Francisco is going to look like so how we will make sure that we meet the needs of what we don't know. Ono said she liked the Futures but is it going to be enough.

Commissioner Lopez asked what the rationale was for some focus group meetings being online and some in person.

Midori Mizuhara, with Gensler said, their partner, Contigo, is leading the effort with 19 focus groups and the process was geographically spread so every district in the city has coverage and was looked at with an equity lens to focus on priority populations, like English as second language, the disability community, elders, parents, concentrating on who are high library users that haven't maybe had a seat at the table to give input to these

plans as much as other populations. The equity focus was figuring out how to put extra time and effort into those priority populations. The selection process was extensive, working with multiple different community-based organizations. Contigo partners with CBOs to recruit and does an open call, compensates everybody that's in those groups so they are paid for their time. A lot of community members preferred digital actually because of their busy schedules, especially the disability community, teens must be in person because they are distracted, and they will look at their smartphone if it's a digital focus group. Elders were in person, and it was a mix because the need was a mix.

President Wolf asked about the Potential Futures and one of the distinctions about this library system is the 27 branches, which means managing real estate and facilities and what is distinctive about the number of branches and the physical quality of them is such an important part of who the Library is and how it platforms and the notion of rethinking how we use our branches is important for our future and thinking about and want to make sure that's included, right now it doesn't feel like it.

President Wolf asked what a Living Laboratory was.

Margaret Sullivan said the Living Laboratory is like an Aspen Institute ideas festival, where each library serves as a place of research, reflection, and ideation.

President Wolf said she found the outcomes are weak and if we're really talking about community, learner's, readers and staff who are really trying to make a difference, those outcomes need to feel more tangible or connected to that language but to say a San Francisco that gets better every day or a bright and brilliant San Francisco, it doesn't have the gravitas of what you have created and asked they put more energy into this aspect. Wolf said they really want to be bold and radical in how we think about outcomes.

Commissioner Lopez said San Francisco is a city with at least five universities and none of the universities or the community colleges have been included in this partnership and the Library collaborates with them.

Commissioner Mall said the language doesn't translate into real life and it needs to be tightened up.

President Wolf thanked the Commissioner for a fantastic conversation and thanked Randall McClure for his leadership on the Strategic Planning effort.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Jason Blandon, Acting CIO, presented the Digital Connections Initiative (DCI), which is a collaboration between the Mayor's Office of Digital Equity and the Library's IT division. Through the collaboration the Library gives its surplus to the Department of Environment, which has the Virtual Warehouse program, in which City Departments can pull that equipment and reassign it. The office of Digital Equity donates the equipment to our non-profit partners, Dev Mission, and Tech Exchange, which helps bridge the digital divide by using the computers to teach people digital literacy. Blandon said the DCI builds collaboration between the city and community through surplus equipment and can maximize the life-span of these computers and reduce e-waste.

Cristina Mitra, Hormel Center Program Manager, gave an update on Pride Month Activities, which included diverse

programming, strong partnerships and exiting community outreach. Mitra said they had a large Pride Parade contingent. Mitra thanked Kate Patterson and her team for publicizing their programs, which were centred at the Main Library and throughout the branches. Mitra said there is greater ownership throughout the system around diverse programming. The Hormel Center hosted Author Louis Niebur and a Club Q Panel as part of Pride programming. They are seeing a trend from all ages, but especially the younger generation, who want to dive into more analog ways of connecting, which is available in a monthly Zine making program. Mitra thanked Collections for enable them to bring free affirming books to the community and said Darcy Drollinger is San Francisco's First Drag Laureate and, when asked what the community should do in response to all the attacks on it, Darcy said sparkle harder.

Denise Schmidt, Collections and Technical Services Manager, gave an overview of the partnership between the Library and the SF Bay Ferry to make the Library's e-book collection available to Ferry riders to checkout without having a library card. There are signs posted on the Ferry with QR codes, which riders can scan to and sign up to try out the Library e-collection, with the goal to convert them into Library card holders. At the end of the three-week trial, they can sign up for a library card and pick up the card in an SFPL branch.

Kate Patterson, Director of Communications, spoke about the Artists-in-Residence Program, which launched in 2015 by the San Francisco Arts Commission. She said the Library hosted four artists last year: tanea lynx, Gazelle Samizay, Xandra Ibarra, and James Q. Chan. The 2023 cohort includes Christopher Burch, Celeste Chan, Tossie Long and Preethi Ramaprasad, all of which are San Francisco based artists and will be paid \$20,000 for their residency, working for ten weeks at the Library and then develop their work.

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said its always good to hear what's going on in the library. He said he was surprised to hear about library surplus equipment, and assumes the Library isn't throwing out 700 computers that are perfectly good, maybe it is giving outdated computers or one that had been replaced by a more recent vintage. He said not everyone has a cellphone or smartphone, and there are plenty of people who are technically capable and very active and they like books.

Maurice Rivers, Executive Director of the OMI Cultural Participation Project said sitting in tonight's meeting feels empowered hearing about the Office of Digital Equity and his community had a bad digital equity experience during COVID, and he said he now feels like can go back to his community and bring some of those resources and computers. Rivers said he has a great relationship with the Ingleside Branch and can bring programming and community events into the Library. He thanked Dr. Lope and City Librarian Lambert for their support.

Commission Discussion

President Wolf said the City Librarian Presentations fit within the Potential Futures outlined in the Strategic Planning Presentation and shows the incredible work the Library is already doing.

Commissioner Ono said the City Librarian's report always includes things that make her proud, the Digital Connections Initiative was very moving, to get all those computers to people in need and giving them tech support. Ono said to get new patrons through the Ferry program is a great initiative.

Commissioner Mall asked if the Ferry Pop-Up Library was the Ferry Organization's idea the Library's.

Schmidt responded that the Ferry group reached out to the Library to see if it was interested in ways to collaborate and promote the Library, and the Library had done a different digital program before and kept the door open with our vendor. She said they are thinking of expanding the program to other places like Salesforce Park, DMV, jury waiting rooms, and hospital waiting rooms.

Mall said it is a brilliant program.

Commissioner Mall asked Kate Patterson the status of the Maya Angelou project.

Kate Patterson said it is still in process, the project was delayed because of COVID and the artist had to rework some of the design for a variety of reasons, but it is moving forward.

Commissioner Lopez said she liked the Digital Connections Initiative because it matched resources with education, not just handing over equipment but giving people the capacity to use it and said the recycle aspect is great.

Lopez asked if the Artists in residence will have exhibitions or programming, and what that will entail, she said she is getting a lot of positive feedback about the Library's presence at the Pride march.

Patterson said we don't know what the project will be because they use their time with the Library to research and explore different avenues and we can't anticipate where they are going with their research or their practice.

President Wolf said it was a lot of fun Marching in Pride with Cristina and her team, so organized, and fabulous it was a glorious day. Wolf said she looks forward to hearing the statistics from the Ferry partnership and how it might expand.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 ADJOURNMENT OF THE JULY 20, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said the Commission should not adjourn until it insists on having a future agenda item on what they would like to see on future agendas.

Commission Discussion

Motion: By Vice President **HUANG**, seconded by Commissioner **LOPEZ** to adjourn the meeting.

Action: AYES 6-0 (Wolf, Huang, Bolander, López, Mall and Ono)

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 PM

Margot Shaub - Commission Affairs Analyst

To access **Commission Meeting recordings** please visit: [Library Commission Meeting Recording](#)

Explanatory documents: Copies of listed explanatory documents are available as follows: (1) from the Commission Liaison Affairs Analyst/Custodian of Records, 6th floor, Main Library; (2) in the rear of Koret Auditorium immediately prior to, and during, the meeting; and (3), to the extent possible, on the Public Library Commission webpage: sfpl.org/library-commission/public-notice/agendas. Additional materials not listed as explanatory documents on this agenda, if any, that are distributed to Library Commissioners prior to or during the meeting in connection with any agenda item will be available to the public for inspection and copying in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.1 and Sunshine Ordinance Sections 67.9, 67.28(b), and 67.28(d).